



SPORTS

THE CANADIAN CHAMPION

TUESDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2000



Merchants goaltender Joel Cameron grabs a shot while Charger Jason Francis looks for a rebound at Mississauga's Iceland Arena Sunday. Milton gave another lacklustre effort on the road and lost 4-1. This essentially cost them top spot in the conference for the first time in four years.

Photo by
GRAHAM PAINE



Unless there's a miracle ...

Merchants can kiss first place goodbye

By **STEVE LeBLANC**
The Champion

The Merchants have given far too many second-rate efforts this year. So perhaps it's only fitting that they'll finish no better than second best.

Barring a minor miracle this week, the local team won't be repeating as regular season champions in the Provincial Jr. A League's West Conference. It'll mark the first time in four seasons that they don't take top spot.

Milton unofficially surrendered the title at Mississauga's Iceland Arena Sunday. Failing to build on a couple of decent performances earlier in the week, they were physically and offensively uninspired in losing to the Chargers 4-1.

"We've consistently not shown up for road games," said head coach Marty Williamson, whose team now stands at 28-12-2-3 with four

games remaining. "We no-showed again tonight."

The Merchants' skipper admitted that the most worrisome aspect of the loss — which left them holding onto third spot in the division — was that it didn't come as a surprise to anyone.

Not that falling to an eighth-place club has become routine just yet, but over the past three months his team's effort and chemistry have been so sporadic that humbling defeats are no longer shocking.

Added Williamson, "We've (coaching staff) talked until we're blue in the face. These guys just don't get how poorly they're playing at times. There's no sense of urgency."

While Phil Barski and Richard Peverley's absence certainly cut into the offense, the locals should have had more than enough firepower available to bury Mississauga.

But instead they had to rely on bantam call-up Kevin Arruda just to get on the scoreboard.

Mississauga potted a couple of goals in the opening frame — taking advantage of some sloppy defence by their guests — and added one each through periods two and three.

Netminder Joel Cameron was a little shaky at times, but also made some huge saves that prevented what could actually have been a blowout.

At home Friday, Milton was much stronger to begin their weekend series with the Chargers. A Family Night capacity crowd saw them jump out to an early lead and go on to win 5-2.

The Merchants eased up in the second, but were solid overall. Andrew Gibson delivered his best goaltending effort to date — holding the fort during his team's brief letdown.

Leading up front was Ryan Carrigan. Now, splitting time between right wing and the point, he did a great job jumping into the rush and was rewarded with two goals.

Ian Malcolm and Mike Wheelihan had a

goal and an assist apiece while Erin call-up Joel Petkoff also lit the lamp. Dan DeLong and Ryan Eby each drew a pair of assists.

Mississauga's scoring came in the last seven minutes of play, once the final verdict was already decided.

The Merchants need to step things up a notch now if they hope to steal second place away from Brampton and secure home-ice advantage for round two of the playoffs.

A two-game home stand this week, starting tonight against Burlington, gives them a fair shake at finishing up in the number two spot.

Merchant notes: Phil Barski, out with a concussion, will undergo examination later this week and will probably be out until the playoffs ... Richard Peverley and Chris Kerr — nursing the flu and a bad back respectively — will likely return this weekend ... Ryan Carrigan had eight goals in January. This marks twice the number he scored through the first three months of the season.



**LETTER
OF THE
MONTH**

Dear Mr. Kevin Wood,
We wanted to write to let you know how pleased we were with the service we received purchasing a 2000 Corolla at your dealership. In particular, we were extremely impressed with our salesman, Christian Febel. We first came by your dealership in August, but didn't end up purchasing until December...we wanted to make sure that we were getting the best car for our money. Each time we visited your location Christian was always courteous and helpful. He telephoned regularly to let us know of any events or promotions that were happening, yet he was never pushy. We visited several other Toyota dealerships throughout Ontario and none of them compared to yours in terms of quality of salesmanship and customer service. Often times people write letters only to complain about the service they receive, however we feel that our experience with your dealership was so positive, that you deserve to hear a compliment for a change.
We look forward to a long relationship with you and your staff.

Sincerely,
Joanne & Sean McQueen



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